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SUBJECT: POTENTIAL PORTUGUESE NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT TO  
ISAF

REF: USDAO LISBON IIR 6879019909 DTG 181142Z SEP 09  
(INCREASED POLICE AND MILITARY TROOP  
COMMITMENTS TO ISAF)

Classified By: Poleconoff Mario Fernandez,  
reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C/NF) Summary: In a surprising development, Portuguese Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Alberto Alves, Head of Strategic Planning and International Affairs at the Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR), Portugal's National Guard equivalent, told poleconoff September 23 that the GNR is poised to deploy approximately 20 trainers to Afghanistan to train and mentor Afghan police as part of the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) with the NATO Training Mission. Although Alves expressed concern that the results of the September 27 parliamentary elections could potentially derail GNR planning, he was confident that the new government would approve the GNR's recommendation to deploy GNR trainers in early 2010. End Summary.

12. (C/NF) According to Alves, the GNR firmly believes it is important for Portugal to participate in EGF activities and had been discussing deployment of trainers to Afghanistan with the EGF for some time. While the GNR fully expects to participate in the EGF Training Center in Kabul (to which he consistently referred as the "Italian Training Center"), it could also deploy individual trainers to the field to train and mentor provincial Afghan police. Alves underscored that the GNR's first priority, however, would be staffing the Training Center; individual trainers would be deployed to the provinces only after Training Center needs were met and then only as members of larger, more robust EGF deployments with adequate security.

13. (C/NF) Alves asserted that the EGF has tentatively scheduled a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan October 5-18 to assess needs. According to Alves, the mission will consist of a minimum of eight officers -- all experts in various fields, such as logistics, finance, personnel, etc. -- from various countries, including France, Italy, and Spain, and will be headed by Portuguese GNR Colonel Jorge Esteves, one of five Portuguese officers currently at the EGF. Upon conclusion of the fact-finding mission, representatives from participating countries will meet in November, tentatively in Paris, to review recommendations and determine country contributions.

14. (C/NF) Alves expressed concern that the upcoming parliamentary elections could throw a wrench in GNR planning. He was particularly concerned about the Prime Minister's comment that he would replace all ministers, including the Minister of the Interior, to whom the GNR reports and who does not oppose the deployment. (Note: The Prime Minister did not say he would replace all ministers. He said only

that there would be a new government with new ministers. His comment has been widely distorted. End note.) In addition, Alves feared that the naming of a new minister could take months, further delaying a decision on GNR participation. Despite these concerns, Alves believed that if the GNR makes a commitment to the EGF under the current government, a new minister would acquiesce, referring to the decision as a "pre-commitment." He lamented that during EGF meetings representatives from other countries were prepared to provide full details regarding their countries' commitments -- "France 150, Italy 150, Spain 40" -- except the Portuguese, a situation he found embarrassing.

¶5. (C/NF) Comment: This is news to us, to put it mildly. We have been urging GNR deployment of trainers to ISAF for well over a year, and our questions about that possibility have been consistently dismissed or parried. Alves' thorough explanation, however, indicates that this is more than just his speculation or conjecture.

For more reporting from Embassy Lisbon and information about Portugal, please see our Intelink site:

<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/portal:portugal>  
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